

Austin Lecture I
Oct. 28, 1985

What's New About the New Day?

01) CHRIST CALLS THE CHURCH TO MISSION AND TO UNITY

One of the most appealing of the ecumenical slogans of the "new day in missions" came out of the 1951 meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches at Rolle, Switzerland. It was "Christ Calls the Church to Mission and to Unity" and thirty-five years later it still has a glorious and relevant ring to it. *we are still trying to do today - hammer out a life & Mission Statement for the church - not just in the 1950s but for the whole church.* *The slogan that came out of that Council, meeting of the W.C.C. in 1951 - that followed it.* *They were doing in 1951 what we are still trying to do today - hammer out a life & Mission Statement for the church - not just in the 1950s but for the whole church.* But I must confess that it used to irritate me. At first I couldn't quite put my finger on what it was that disquieted me about it. Then I realized that the problem was as much with me as with the slogan, for I am a historian, not a theologian, and it was the historically awkward coupling of "mission" and "unity" that somehow fell jarringly on my ears. Putting the two together sounded like a historical contradiction. A call to mission, yes... But mission and unity? By and large, in the history of Protestantism, at least, mission has come out of disunity, and to a lesser extent union (organic church union) has brought a withering of mission.

To mention this so soon after we have joyfully celebrated the glorious reunion of Presbyterians North and South may seem indelicate, but when I chose as my topic for this series of mission lectures "Lights and Shadows of the New Day in Missions" I made no promise to skip over the shadows. In the long run it is the shadows that make the light more glorious, so let me first work through some of the shadows that history casts over that phrase, "Christ calls the Church to Mission and to Unity". Then, by faith, we may begin to look for light in what we believe ~~will~~ ^{can indeed} be a new day for us and for our churches. *Probs.*

The first problem with the slogan is the awkward fact that When the Protestant world mission was born, for example in the 18th century, it came not so much from the great, united "mainline" churches of the Reformation, but more from the disunited sects out on the fringes of respectable Christendom. It came from the Pietists, the Moravians, the Particular Baptists. It is a curious thing that the Reformers, great fathers of the church though they were, took over their

theology from St. Paul but very adroitly side-stepped the mission which gave life and direction to his theology. The work of the major Reformers like Luther and Calvin was with the Church, that is Israel (in the New Testament sense). But Paul's mission was to the Gentiles, to the heathen. *How often in history the Church is not an enabler in mission, but an obstacle.*

So when in 1706 Frederick IV of Denmark, who was a devout Lutheran, looked about for his first missionaries, he went not to the Church as such, but to the Pietists, and organized, mainline Lutherans thundered against the folly of this mission which sought to convert savages who "have nothing human about them but the shape of their bodies", as one prominent Lutheran bitingly observed.

In that first Danish mission to Tranquebar in India, which marks the beginning of a Protestant world mission, there was only one regular Lutheran churchman. The rest were fringe Lutherans, Pietist enthusiasts. And as far as I can discover, it was the one churchman who all too soon gave up the mission and returned to Christian Europe, leaving the Pietists to hold the field.

The story is the same a generation later in the middle of that century of beginnings. In 1732 it was the Moravians, a branch of the same Pietist stream, not mainline Lutherans, who almost single-handedly kept Protestant missions alive. Out of a little camp of refugees, a Moravian village of only 600 families, there began to flow a stream of missionaries sixty years before Carey, that in the next 150 years turned into a flood of more than 2,000 Moravian missionaries spreading out to take the gospel across a world which Protestants had neglected for two hundred years. They started it all with just two naive but totally committed people, a potter and a carpenter who left Germany for the West Indies on foot, by way of Denmark, with nothing but a pack apiece on their backs and three dollars in their pockets. Their goal, quite frankly expressed by their leader, Zinzendorf, was not churches and unity, but converts and salvation.

Or take William Carey, a part-time teacher, part-time shoemaker, and weekend Baptist preacher who became the father of English world missions. It was not until he had left the comforting communion of the Anglican church, that authorized and apostolic medium of Christian unity,--not until he had joined the small separatist sect

of the Particular Baptists (not even General Baptists), that his eyes were opened and he began to preach a world mission for the church. As a matter of fact, when he volunteered as a missionary to India the first reaction of his solidly Anglican father was, "Is William mad?" (Oussoren, p. 38). Not even all the the Particular Baptists were united in favor of this mission. That first world missionary society was called, "A Society founded among the Particular Baptists", not a Society of the Particular Baptists. (ibid, p. 144).

And what happened when our own Presbyterian Church right here in America tried to organize a Board of Foreign Missions in 1837? They split the church wide open, cut it in half in fact. It was the most serious schism we have ever had in terms of comparative numbers on each side, Old School conservatives against New School liberals, and it was the argument over how to organize for mission, as much as theology that split the church. The same issue, missions, split the church again in the 1930s. But the two schisms, 99 years apart, represent an astonishing and most ironic reversal of theological labels. In 1837 it was the liberals, the New School, who favored a voluntary society, a parachurch organization for mission (the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission), and it was the conservatives, the Old School, who insisted on Presbyterian church control. A century later, in 1936, it was the conservatives who wanted a voluntary society (the Independent Board of Presbyterian Foreign Mission) and it was the liberals (comparatively speaking) who drove them out of the church for not supporting the church controlled Board of Foreign Missions.

There is an element of exaggeration, of course, in this all too quick review. I haven't mentioned, for example, some early Anglican societies because they were more colonially than world oriented. And it is true that as the 19th century wore on, more and more denominational societies entered the field, and some of the voluntary societies turned into church boards. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the 19th century was preeminently a century of voluntary, independent mission societies proceeding out of existing divisions to carry the gospel to the ends of the earth.

It is not out of ^{church} unity that world missions have been born. They are conceived, more often than not, in controversy and disunity.

Isn't that the way it has always been? Was it not at the precise moment when the apostolic church discovered its world mission that it almost lost its vaunted unity. What happened when St. Paul's mission to the Gentiles broke Christianity out of its Jewish boundaries into a world mission? He split the church: culture-bound Judaizers against a mission that transcends culture. He almost split the Apostles. Unity *in the church* does not seem to be the happy bed-fellow of mission that our slogan might imply: Christ Calls the Church to Mission and to Unity.

Finally, it is almost a deathblow to our fondest hopes for mission and unity to observe that many of the churches with the most urgent sense of mission and the least desire for union are among the fastest growing churches in the world. What are we asking for, when we call the church to mission and unity.., suicide?

It is the splintering sects that are growing and expanding both here and abroad, while the uniting mainline churches are slipping faster and faster downhill. Here are some dispiriting statistics. In the twenty years between 1960 and 1979 six of our more familiar ecumenical denominations lost a combined total of three and a half million members. They were the Episcopal Church, the Lutheran Church of America, the United Presbyterians, the Disciples of Christ and the United Methodists (Christianity Today, Sept. 18, '81, p. 16). More recent figures from Princeton's Gallup Poll organization confirm the trend, and compare mainline decline with some astonishing gains by what it describes as more independent, "evangelical" churches. The poll studied membership losses and gains in the thirteen years from 1970 to 1983:

			<u>1983 members</u>
United Presbyterian	<u>down</u>	23%	to 3,122,000
Episcopal	"	15%	2,794,000
United Ch. of Christ	"	13%	1,701,000
United Methodist	"	11% ('70-'82)	9,405,000
<u>by contrast</u>			
Assemblies of God	<u>up</u>	85%	to 1,154,000
7th Day Adventist	"	34% ('73-'83)	623,000
Church of the Nazarene	"	22% ('73-'83)	1,879,000
Southern Baptist	"	22%	14,185,000

5)

17

(Religion in America: 1935-1985; and Emerging Trends VI, 7)

The picture doesn't get any better when we turn from church membership to compare missionary personnel in the mainline churches with the number of missionaries sent out by churches less concerned with organized unity. Perhaps the sharpest criticism raised against a lop-sided emphasis on unity is the demonstrable fact that whereas one of the strongest arguments in favor of the formation of the World Council of Churches forty years ago was that the mission of the church demands the unity of the church for effective mission, in actual practice, the unity for mission achieved in the WCC has been followed by a shocking decline in ^{personal} the missionary outreach of the churches which are its members. It is in churches and societies which are outside the structures of the WCC that personal missionary involvement has surprisingly intensified and enlarged.

The outstanding symbol of the missionary unity of the ecumenical movement was the merger, in 1962, of the missionary line of the ecumenical movement, the International Missionary Council, into the unity line, the World Council of Churches as the latter's Commission on World Mission and Evangelism. On paper this seems eminently reasonable and organizationally tidy. After all, ecumenics and mission belong together.

But in practice, for reasons that are not altogether clear, imperceptibly at first and then with gathering momentum enthusiasm for missions and evangelism began to leak out of the ecumenical movement and the WCC moved instead in the direction of inter-church relations and political concerns. These are important matters (relations and politics) in their own right. But we must ask, why has the result been such an ominous decline in the overseas missions of the ecumenical denominations?

Some attribute the attrition of missionary personnel to a spreading lack of interest in missions. Wrong. In actual fact Christian enthusiasm for world mission seems to be at a new high, even in Presbyterian circles. For the first time last year Presbyterians outnumbered Baptists among the 17,000 college students attending the triennial Urbana Missionary Conference on the University of Illinois

campus. And instead of decreasing, the number of overseas missionaries sent from North America across the world continues to leap upward. In the five years from 1975 to 1979 the number increased 27%, from 35,000 to 44,450 (numbers rounded). If short-termers, including those serving less than twelve months, are factored in on a year of service per

person basis, the growth is a phenomenal 50%, which is about 10% every year. In other words, the North American missionary force is growing at the rate of 6.8% a year, and that is almost three times the rate of growth of the population of the United States. (Mission Handbook of North American Protestant Ministries Overseas (12th ed., 1980; see also Christianity Today, Mar. 27, '81, p. 60).

That much is good news. The bad news is that none of this dramatic explosion in contemporary North American missionary personnel overseas can be credited to the mainline churches as denominations or church agencies. The increase is almost entirely channeled outside the establishment. For example, match the stunning percentage decrease in overseas career missionaries in some familiar ecumenical denominations, against the increase in two leading independent denominations. The figures are for the 8 years 1972 to 1979:

PCUSA - Overseas Miss.

1927 - 1606 (Unit)

1982 - 831 (N.S.)

1986 - 627 (rounded) total

492

313

avg appt
over 10 yrs.

Episcopal, down	-79%	But.. Southern Bapt. up +88%
United Presbyterian	-72%	Assemblies of God +49%
Lutheran Church in America	-70%	
United Church of Christ	-66%	
United Methodist	-46%	(Ibid. 9/18/81, p. 16)

As David Stowe, executive of the United Church of Christ's Board of World Ministries wrote in his foreword to the 1980 Missions Handbook, comparing 1970 to 1980:

- "1. The traditional missionary sending system is stronger than ever.
- "2. The foreign missionary force is at an all-time high and still growing.
- "3. [But] the center of gravity of Protestant missionary-sending is shifting constantly away from the 'ecumenical' agencies toward conservative and fundamentalist ones... In 1960 the latter took the lead over NCC-related mission boards, and that trend has now persisted for twenty years."

Nos
7)

V. J. L.

I can remember the first indications of that trend appearing even earlier. At the end of World War II when the first much-heralded shipload of foreign missionaries, over 300 of them, sailed for the orient after the years of war-enforced exile from their mission fields, my brother Charles was on the ship with his family sailing for India. He told me of the embarrassment of the churches in Hawaii at the welcome they had planned to speed the missionaries on their way. All the arrangements had been carefully made by the Honolulu Council of Churches. Episcopalians would take care of Episcopalian missionaries during their one-day stopover in the islands. Presbyterians would take care of Presbyterians; Methodists of Methodist missionaries, Congregationalists of Congregationalists, and so on. So the ship docked and the good church people gathered under signs proclaiming themselves as Presbyterian, Methodists, etc. so that the missionaries would recognize their hosts. But the best laid plans of mice and men gang aft agley. The denominational missionaries trooped decorously to their signs all right, but behind them, milling uncertainly about in great numbers were the hosts of the unwashed--the Adventists, the Pentecostals, the sects--advancing to their mission in far greater numbers and zeal, if not with greater unity and judgment, as we like to think.

The Honolulu Council of Churches, and the whole conciliar church movement, is still trying to recover from that shock, and its aftermath quakes. For forty years mainline missions as a visible, vigorous presence have been retreating into the shadows. ^{It is a hard fact that} it raises questions ^{anyone concerned about the world mission} we must face sooner or later. Is the villain in all this the rise of the ecumenical movement? Has emphasis on unity shouldered aside evangelism and mission? Is this the "new day" in missions for which we have longed, or, for most of our denominations, is it the "dark night" of our modern missionary movement?

Turn to
20th c. p. 5

I think I have been gloomy long enough. I am going to answer those pessimistic questions in the negative. No, the villain is not the ecumenical movement. No, unity does not make mission obsolete. And, no, this is not our "dark night", ^{I have been talking about} for there is light beyond and above ~~those~~ the shadows. What the church needs in its present situation is not more

^

What's New About New Ser.

5)

discouragement, but a touch of hope and a quickening of faith, and a renewed commitment to ^{both} ~~its~~ mandates ^{and unity.} for mission. In the dark night, if that is what this is, we need something of the tough optimism of an Adoniram Judson who, after prisons and death marches and the loss of his dear wife, could declare in what seemed a time without hope and without a future, that by God's grace even the darkest night turns into day, and that "the future is as bright as the promises of God".

So now let me turn from the problems to some signs of hope. Three signs of hope. First, even the most zealous advocates of mission are discovering that Christian mission needs Christian unity. Second, even the most ardent proponents of church ^{unity} ~~union~~ are discovering that ^{unity is} church-unions are not ^{an} ~~ends in themselves~~ ^{itself} but demands the larger purposes of a ~~world~~ Christian mission, ^{to a world still not effectively reached with the good news of the gospel;} And third, neither ~~its~~ unity nor ~~its~~ mission belong to the church, they are the gift and mandate of God.

A. Look first with me at the ~~mission's~~ discovery of the need for unity. Suppose we grant that one-sided, inward-looking preoccupation with the unity of the church has brought a lamentable retreat from ~~its~~ ^{its} missionary mandate. Is the only alternative a one-sided stress on missions that will further tear apart the already grievously divided Body of Christ? Must mission always mean an end to unity?

Quite the opposite. Yes, zeal for missions has too often led to controversy and division, but the other side of the coin is that in modern times it was precisely in the practice of their mission that the divided churches of Protestantism first discovered the practical urgencies of their need for Christian unity.

I used William Carey as an example of mission proceeding from division, not unity. But he is also an example of a call to unity that came from mission. True, he had left England separated from the Anglican communion and convinced that each denomination should work separately in its foreign fields to avoid discord and confusion. But twelve years work in India taught him that Particular Baptists working alone, however zealous they might be for mission, would never by themselves make much of an impression on a massively unbelieving world. So in 1805 he called for a world missionary conference "of all denominations" to meet in South Africa to discuss the challenge of a world mission common to them all. Carey was ahead of his time not only

9)

in mission, but also in recognizing the need for unity. Unfortunately, neither his own Particular Baptists nor the Anglicans from whom he had separated, were interested in his impossible dream.

One of the earliest examples of how mission not only needs unity but can actually produce it, ^{was} is described by Daniel Fleming ^{describes it in his book,} (Devolution in Missions Administration, 1916, pp. 50 ff). In the coastal city of Amoy, China, ~~more than a hundred years ago~~, in the 1850s, an English Presbyterian mission and an American Dutch Reformed mission had each been successful in planting a number of city congregations. The time had come, they began to think, to form the churches into presbyteries. Normally the English would have formed a presbytery reporting back to the General Assembly in England, and the American Dutch would organize a classis under the jurisdiction of their General Synod back in New Jersey.

But the two groups had been working together in such happy harmony that the Chinese Christians scarcely realized that their missionaries actually belonged to different churches at home. Wisely, the missionaries decided to ask their respective home churches for permission to form one single presbytery out of the two groups. Why divide the Chinese church by imported foreign disunities? The English agreed but the Dutch in America were more stubborn. "Form your classis (presbytery)," they decreed, "but keep it under our own General Synod".

That might have been the end of that first, tentative gesture toward Christian unity in China had not the Dutch missionaries been as stubborn as their home Synod. What would happen, their spokesman, Dr. Talmage asked, if we insist that a Chinese presbytery must be subject to the higher decisions of an American General Synod? You say that this would insure justice and direction and help in case difficult problems arise in the Chinese presbytery? But how will you deal with a complaint from a Chinese Christian who hasn't the money for a trip to New York, and who doesn't speak English? You would ask me to interpret for him? But his complaint might be against me, the missionary. And besides, he wrote, how much do you know in New Jersey about the kinds of puzzling problems that our presbytery here in China, in a completely different setting and culture, is likely to face. No, he concluded, don't impose a yoke like this on the little church which God is gathering..in that

far off land. Let the Chinese presbytery be independent and united. And if you won't, then our answer must be that we can no longer serve you here. Bring us, your missionaries, home and replace us with ones who will do what you want to do but which to us seems wrong. (Fleming, pp. 52-54). I am happy to say that finally, in 1864 the General Synod in America surrendered and gave the little presbytery its independence and its unity.

There is an inner imperative in the thrust of mission that demands unity. It is more than ecclesiastical pragmatism, it is an evangelistic imperative. The first Indian bishop of the Anglican church in India was Azariah of Dornakal. In 1935 he requested an interview with Dr. Ambedkar, leader of India's millions of untouchables, the harijan. He had heard that Ambedkar was leading them out of Hinduism. "Hinduism is not a religion; it is a disease," Ambedkar had declared in angry protest at its treatment of the outcastes. The Anglican bishop gently observed that it would not be enough for them to give up their Hinduism. They must have something else or they will be empty. "Would you consider bringing them into the Christian faith, where they will be welcome," he said. Dr. Ambedkar thought for a moment and replied, "I am well aware of all that the Christian church has done for the outcastes... But we Harijans are one community all over India, and our strength is in our unity. Can you in the Christian church offer us any unity comparable to that?" And the bishop was silent.

The quest for visible Christian unity is not a mere option in mission. ~~As the Anglican bp. began to realize, it is an absolute necessity if evangelism is to be credible and effective. It is an evangelistic necessity. The bishop realized for almost the first time that disunity in the churches of South India was a~~ For he perceived the terrible truth, almost the first time, that disunity in the churches of South India was a sin, an almost unforgiveable sin, for it was turning countless of millions away from Jesus Christ. More than anything else, the experience of that one interview transformed Azariah the evangelist into a tireless crusader for the union negotiations that finally produced the Church of South India. It was a veritable ecumenical miracle, uniting for the first time in history Anglicans, Presbyterians, Congregationalists and Methodists in one church. Not the least miraculous element in that miracle was that it produced a Presbyterian bishop, a missionary bishop, Lesslie Newbigin.

11

The same Bishop Newbigin has described the necessity for Christian unity in theological, not simply evangelistic terms. The church must be united because that is the will of God, he insists. If you object, What's wrong with different branches of one church?, he replies, "They are not different branches; they are broken parts of a body, the Body of Christ, and while they are broken He remains crucified." This growing recognition among Christians in every theological camp that the church's mission demands some form of visible unity is the first great ground of hope for a "new day", in our day.

B. A second reason for hope is the ^{realization} recognition among enthusiasts for unity that mission is as integral to the nature of the church as unity. Not without reason has our reunited Presbyterian Church in its new Book of Order added "mission" to the traditional marks of the church which Reformed theology has always recognized: the faithful preaching and hearing of the gospel, the administration of the sacraments as instituted by Christ, and, as Calvin often added, church discipline. Now we have added another, the church's mission.

This is a timely recognition of the fact that though one-sided, outward-looking preoccupation with the mission of the church has time and again grievously broken its visible unity in Christ, the only alternative is not an abdication of witness and service to the world while we bind up our own wounds.

The quest for church union ~~does~~ need not weaken our already declining outreach to the world beyond the church. Quite the opposite, ~~That is always a danger,~~ as the first General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, W.A. Visser't Hooft clearly recognized. Anxious lest in its newly recovered zeal for unity the church should lose its taste for mission, he reminded his fellow ecumenicists that "if the church is not a missionary church, if evangelism is not one of its vital functions, it shares responsibility for the confusion and antagonisms in the world". ("The Gathering of the Scattered Churches of God", in E. Jurji, The Ecumenical Era in Church and Society, N.Y.: Macmillan, 1959, p. 30). In other words, ecumenics without mission not only will fail to unite the church, it will further divide the world.

M. J. F.

What does it profit a man? It profits a man the world, and the world is empty? - Tobias A. Frey
Cited in Paradise Falls, by Don Whitcomb. NY Vietnam, 1968 p. preface. Fuller [11]

The subject suggested for this brief address ~~is~~ was Mission and Ecumenics, and I accepted gladly for what ~~subject~~ ^{better} could ~~be more appropriate~~ ^{than} to describe the first 40 years of Fuller Theological Seminary. Mission, of course, Out of Fuller has been come what ~~may~~ is probably the largest, and most certainly the ~~most influential~~ best known and most influential School of World Mission in the world. And ecumenics. Not quite so obvious, perhaps, in a ~~theological~~ ^{narrowly} world which ~~seems to~~ tends to equate ecumenics ~~with religious pluralism or organizational~~ ^{with religious pluralism} ~~chick~~ ^{on the one hand, or broadly} ~~unin~~ ^{with religious pluralism}, ~~or rather in the specific sense, or religious in the narrow sense,~~ ^{or broadly} ~~with religious pluralism, to take a broader view.~~ ^{academic community} But in the real sense of the word, where in the world is there an ~~ecumenical~~ ^{academic community} fellowship more global and ~~more interdenominational~~, more Biblical & theological, more global and interdenominational, more evangelistic and yet more concerned with the concrete, social felt needs of the whole human race than right here, where out of nothing 40 years ago, there has sprung into being one of the ten most influential theological schools in the country.

But enough of flattery - even if it's true. This is no funeral.

I could also say that "mission & ecumenics" sounds oddly dated as ~~a title for an address~~ a subject for discussion as we begin to close the books on the 20th c. & look forward to the 21st. Some today say that "missions" belongs back in the 19th c.; & that "ecumenics" faltered and began to decline in the last third of the 20th century. Neither is either relevant or significant today, so they say.

Well, this much is true. The dominant posture Christian life of the 19th century, in Protestantism at least, was the modern missionary movement. And it is equally true that the dominant current of most of the 20th century, ^{beginning} at Edinburgh in 1910, ~~was~~ ^{at Vatican II in} for Protestants, 1964 for the Orthodox (Council of Pope & Patriarch in 900 AD, at Jerusalem), ~~filled~~ ^{filled} in 1962 for R.C.,

Test the reason - sense now comes to limitations -
liberal act - accept precisely Newbigin's outdated "scientific" paradigm.

Stone -

2 critiques of Newbigin

① Newbigin deals with an outdated scientism, which he tears apart

Two things must be added to his ^{strong} picture of modern science, which change the perspective.

(a) The humanist consensus. All structures exist to serve human existence and needs. Even left-wing govts. call themselves

"Peoples" Republics. This has modified scientific impersonality.

Cf. also women's liberation movement. Powerfully effected, western culture

(b) The democratic consensus. All human beings have rights, and means must be found to implement these rights.

China - you can't have other modernizations without recognizing the necessity of human equality of rights.

② Newbigin - misjudges the basic nature of modern science.

Shinn - science is a search for knowledge and for means of implementing knowledge when found.

Is science as purposeless as N. portrays it. The faith of science is that beyond the "facts" there are values.

③ Newbigin's alternative is inadequate. His proposal is not establishment - but freedom ^{as much} for an exclusivist religion (Xtly + Islam) as for a scientific religion. He reintroduces the establishment of religion. He opposes Gladstone's

statement deploring "parity" of all religions. [But does he not rather affirm

the impossibility of accepting all religions' 'truth claims' as true, rather than

establishing government acceptance of any one "truth claim" as the norm. Any community ~~has~~ in any gov't has the right to teach its own "truth claim".

He actually opposed in Birmingham the establishment of "relativism" as the only ^{officially} approved religious teaching in the schools.

→ Strachey - "Modern" & "Post-Modern". - Allen, anticipating, changed his title to "post-Enlightenment".

"African revolution" - from the bottom to the zipper in men's pants.

Church growth - 95% of the growth is changing church membership. [But not restoring a lost deep commitment, "growth" in its own right]

Bloom - students have only 2 basic convictions. ① truth is relative ② human beings are equal.